

MAY 11 1987

8705.10 Sunday 5:34 a.m.
by FAX

To: Josh Lederberg

From: Bob Merton

About: JL's splendid ms. book-review of Kanigel, APPRENTICE
TO GENIUS: THE MAKING OF A SCIENTIFIC DYNASTY intended
for the pages of ISIS

All sorts of truly trivial moments can have their disproportionately larger outcomes. (Poincare managed to say something of the sort and say it rather more precisely -- and memorably.) Which is only to report that once again, our Sunday TIMES did not arrive early, as it once did, which led me to look for attractive reading-matter at my solitary breakfast, which led me to scan Harriet's desktop (since her scholarly correspondence is usually more interesting to me than mine (already read), which led me to your review of Kanigel. The herewith Faxed marginalia indicates how closely I read it and how much I admired your condensed sociological interpretation of the Kanigel text (which I somehow doubt exhibited quite the same degree of sociological insight into the social processes entering into the historical and journalistic narrative).

I need not -- and won't -- repeat the substance of those marginalia. But as you see, I do think that you may want to reconsider your 2nd full ¶ on page 2, most particularly, your writing: "This [what is the antecedent?] is sometimes MOCKED [mocked? mocked!] as a 'Matthew effect' [which, in turn, may be a most mysterious allusion for most readers of ISIS]. . ."

As I suggest, the otherwise impeccable ¶ deals, not with the M-effect but with a process briefly dealt with in the paper entitled "The M-Effect" and in a succession of papers, some of which are spottily gathered together in the attached bibliography on "the accumulation of advantage."

I obviously can make nothing of your statement that the "M-effect" mocks the, to me, fundamental process of the accumulation of advantage in advancing the frontiers of knowledge even as it works to advance the careers of those individual scientists who convert those advantages into accomplishments. With that in mind, I append two extracts: one from my filial account of Geo. Sarton's "mentorship style" which I have come to recognize to provide me with a succession of gifts that I identify as a case of "accumulation of advantage." The other extract is from THE SOCIOLOGY OF SCIENCE: AN EPISODIC MEMOIR, 1979, which summarizes the process of accumulation of advantage and that process in the scientific biography of Tom Kuhn.

Now see what a superb review-ms. and an absent Sunday TIMES have combined to work ('work' being, of course, the present indicative of 'wrought').